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May 30, 2003

GROOMING REGULATIONS: Bill would ease beach rules

It needs House OK; Gov. said she would sign

LANSGING (AP) - Beach-front property owners would be able to use a machine to level and groom the top inches of sand on the beach without a permit under a bill approved Thursday by the state Senate.

The bill's passage comes as Great Lakes levels remain low, exposing wide strips of land as new beaches.

The Senate adopted several amendments to clarify details of the bill, and both Republicans and Democrats endorsed the final version.

"We hope for a happy summer on the beach," said Sen. Liz Brater, D-Ann Arbor, and a key negotiator on the bill.

The bill would allow property owners to mechanically or manually perform beach maintenance in up to 4 inches in the sand. Now, property owners must apply for a permit to perform any beach maintenance outside manually raking the sand.

The state Department of Environmental Quality and a number of House Democrats opposed the bill because they said it will destroy vegetation growing along the bottomlands of the lakes.

In a 2000 briefing report, a DEQ biologist wrote of newly exposed land in the Saginaw Bay area:

A spokeswoman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm said she is expected to sign it.

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